

Assessing the Data 'Quantum' Leap in Agriculture and Food Systems

Consultations for New Strategic Directions

Monday 13 February 2023 | 12:00 – 18:30 CET
IFAD HQ, Rome, Italy



A consultation event jointly organized by the European Commission, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the Global Donor Platform for Rural Development (GDPRD) and the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data (GPSDD)

Background and rationale

In August 2014, former UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon made provisions to mobilize a “data revolution” for sustainable development. In response to this call, an Independent Expert Advisory Group was established which came up with a series of recommendations and priorities that were brought to the attention of international development institutions.

The decision of all UN Member States to adopt the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which set out a 15-year plan to achieve 17 specific Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), brought forth additional momentum for a data revolution in 2015. To measure and monitor progress towards the achievement of the 17 Goals, an extensive reporting framework was established based on a robust set of standardized indicators and targets, and under the direct responsibility of each member state. In parallel with a new focus on the importance of data for reporting on development progress, increased priority was given on the need for high quality and timely data to inform decision- and policy-making, as well as investment strategies.

A plethora of data initiatives have been born since, with extensive support from the donor community. Of particular interest to the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), as well as the other Rome-based Agencies, are the data projects that are now in place in support of SDG 2 – which calls for “Zero Hunger” – and more in general all those SDGs that promote agricultural and rural development.

Examples of the areas where interventions have taken place to support the data revolution include:

- Technological innovations in the collection of data;
- Open data for improved accessibility of data;
- Alternative sources of data
- Big data;
- Capacity development and modernization of statistical systems;
- Privacy protection;
- Data analytics; and
- Data use for informing policy, decision-making and accountability.

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While much progress has been made in support of the data revolution, the various initiatives associated with it were largely formulated and implemented independently. There are therefore very good prospects for a higher degree of coordination and cooperation across initiatives. Improved coordination between these initiatives could lead to efficiencies and a concerted move towards SDG2.

This was highlighted in the 50th session of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS 50) held in October 2022, where a call was made for more coordinated policy responses to improve food security. Better and harmonized data are critical for evidence-informed policy decisions, and CFS 50 noted that despite growing availability of data and information on food security, policy makers are not aware of their existence or do not use them appropriately. Fundamental gaps exist in the types of data collected, their timeliness and policy-relevance. Low capacity of countries for data analysis and data use were identified as key barriers to effectiveness of data-informed policy action.

Against this backdrop, the European Commission, IFAD and the Global Donor Platform for Rural Development (GDPRD) are organizing an event on “**Assessing the data ‘quantum’ leap in agriculture and food systems: consultations for new strategic directions**”, which will bring together the donor community to take stock of the various and diverse data initiatives in agriculture, food systems and rural development, more than a decade after the data revolution.

The event title refers to the notion of *quantum leap*, i.e. the quantum leap in the collection and production of agricultural data that took place over the last decade, following the disastrous food security crisis in 2008 and the 2014 call by the UN Secretary-General to start a data revolution. While recognizing the significant progress in the design and development of data production, the event seeks to guide the discussion on the next phase of investments in data systems.

Objectives

The **overarching objective** of the event will be to bring together representatives from the donor community and from other influential institutions and organizations to assess how data for agriculture and food security have evolved over the last decade – on both the supply and demand side – and to understand what has or has not worked, to ultimately design options and opportunities for future development, support and knowledge sharing.

This event strives to address two main issues:

On the one hand, it will offer an opportunity for data initiatives to be presented and discussed, and to report on the implementation progress and what has been achieved so far, as well as on challenges being faced. It will also allow the community to investigate possible synergies and options for collaboration.

On the other hand, it will provide an occasion for donors to be fully briefed on several of the key existing data initiatives to inform and optimize their future investments in the data arena, in line with their current investment strategies and goals.

The event will enable key donors to assess the landscape of current data initiatives, to inform strategic decisions on funding data initiatives in agriculture and food security and make these more impactful.



The **sub-objectives** of the event will be to:

- Provide an opportunity for organizations involved in data collection, dissemination and implementation to present the various initiatives they have launched and/or are working on;
- Understand the added value of each of these initiatives;
- Promote the establishment of possible synergies and cross-fertilization opportunities; and
- Establish linkages with broader conversations, including the CFS Open-Ended Working Group on Data, on coordinated efforts for improved food systems and the role of data.

Expected outcomes

The expected outcomes of the event are as follows:

- (1) Donors and data organizations will have a better understanding of the areas where investments in agricultural and food systems data have shown success, potential or clear gaps;
- (2) Participants will be able to identify possibilities of replication of results and outcomes of some initiatives, including by looking at other sectors (e.g., health);
- (3) Donors will be able to assess pathways and options for future support and investment in data; and
- (4) New collaboration partnerships and coordination among implementing organizations will be established and improved.

Date, venue, audience, format and communications

This by-invitation event will take place on 13 February 2023, in Rome, Italy at IFAD Headquarters. It will run from 12:00 to 18:30 p.m. CET. Although the event is designed for a donor and data stakeholders audience specifically, its findings and deliberations shall be showcased at some stage to the public, providing visibility to the data-related initiatives the donor community has invested in.